

referred to Nick Bacon, director, Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs; and Dennis Rainey, executive director, FamilyLife.

Statement on the Anniversary of Ukraine's Closing of the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant

April 26, 2001

Last year on December 15, Ukraine ended one of the darkest chapters of the Soviet legacy and opened a new stage in Ukraine's evolution into a modern European state when it permanently closed the Chernobyl nuclear plant.

Closing Chernobyl created the circumstances for a safer and more prosperous Ukraine for future generations. We are reminded of this today on the 15th anniversary of the terrible accident at Chernobyl and are again grateful that an environmental threat has been removed from the central European landscape.

Today's anniversary is an occasion for the global community to pause and reflect on the lessons provided by this disaster, to recall the valor and dignity that the people of Ukraine displayed in the face of adversity, and to acknowledge the suffering that many victims of Chernobyl continue to endure throughout the region.

I am proud of the American people's role in helping to alleviate this suffering—at the time of the tragedy and continuing through today. I am proud of our continued efforts to work with Ukraine to improve nuclear safety and mitigate the harsh social impact of Chernobyl's closure on the local population.

Much work remains to be done in Ukraine's transition to a modern European state. This work will require strong and courageous leadership over the coming months and years. It will require real support for democracy and difficult but necessary reforms. Last year strong Ukrainian leadership and committed international assistance achieved great results in Chernobyl. I urge Ukraine to stay on the path of reform it set out upon last year. Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt once noted that "it is only through strife, through hard and dangerous endeavor,

that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness."

I firmly believe that Ukraine's national greatness rests in Europe and in its transatlantic and global ties. The United States stands ready to work with Ukraine as it undertakes the political and economic reforms necessary to build these ties that are so vital to the brighter future Ukrainians seek for themselves and their children.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act"

April 26, 2001

America's children represent our greatest hope for the future. I commend the House for its bipartisan passing of the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act," which will make it a separate felony to harm an unborn child in the course of committing any one of 68 Federal offenses. This legislation affirms our commitment to a culture of life, which welcomes and protects children.

Remarks at a Celebration of Reading in Houston, Texas

April 26, 2001

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you very much. Laura and I are really glad to be back in Texas. *[Laughter]* I didn't realize, Dad, until I saw that video, how different your life has been since I'm the President and you're not. *[Laughter]* Sounds like it's been pretty rough. And perhaps you and I should sit down and have a discussion, talk about it. Let me think: I have an opening the 27th of September. *[Laughter]*

We have some other family issues to discuss, like where to put my Presidential Library. *[Laughter]* I've decided not to go through the hassle of raising money. And so, you know my dad's library? We're just going to add, "And Son." *[Laughter]* As you can already tell, lately my dad has been calling me "43." I call him "41." It's kind of shorthand we have in our family. And we have a nickname for Mother as well. To show you where she stands in the power structure of

this family, we call her “Number One.” [Laughter]

And so I’m going to turn the stage back to Number One, and then close the program with some remarks of my own. It’s really great to be back in Houston and to return bearing the proudest title ever been given to me: Son of Barbara and George Bush.

[At this point, the *Celebration of Reading* proceeded.]

The President. Well, thank you. Thank you, Laura. Once again, thank you all for that warm welcome. I know all of you join me in thanking the authors for being here tonight. The readings were fantastic, and we appreciate it.

You’ve certainly set a high standard for a little reading I intend to do tonight. [Laughter] Now, some people think my mom took up the cause of literacy—[laughter]—out of a sense of guilt over my own upbringing. [Laughter] That’s one reason why she was so happy I married a teacher.

The truth is, I guess I could have paid a little closer attention when I was in English class, but it all worked out okay. [Laughter] I’m gainfully employed. [Laughter] And I even have a new book out, and I brought along a copy. Right, here it is. I didn’t actually write all of this, but I did inspire it. [Laughter] Some guy put together a collection of my wit and wisdom. [Laughter] Or as he calls it, my accidental wit and wisdom.

It’s not exactly a world transformed, but I’m kind of proud that my words are already in book form. [Laughter] And I thought tonight I would share a few quotable passages with you. It’s kind of like thoughts of Chairman Mao—[laughter]—only with laughs and not in Chinese. [Laughter]

Here’s one. And I actually said this. [Laughter] “I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully.” [Laughter] Now, that makes you stop and think. [Laughter] Anyone can give you a coherent sentence, but something like this takes you to an entirely new dimension. [Laughter]

Here’s another: “I understand small-business growth; I was one.” [Laughter] My, do I love great literature. I said this up in New Hampshire: “I appreciate preservation. It’s what you’ve got to do when you run for Presi-

dent.” [Laughter] “You’ve got to preserve.” You know, I really don’t have the slightest idea what I was talking about there. [Laughter]

You know, a lot of times on the campaign, they asked me about economics, and I actually said this. “More and more of our imports come from overseas.” [Laughter]

Now, most people would say this when they’re talking about the economy. “We ought to make the pie bigger.” [Laughter] However, I said this. [Laughter] “We ought to make the pie higher.” [Laughter] It is a very complicated economic point I was making there. [Laughter] But believe me—believe me, what this country needs is taller pie. [Laughter]

And how about this for a foreign policy vision: “When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world. And we knew exactly who the ‘they’ were.” [Laughter] “It was ‘us’ versus ‘them.’” [Laughter] “And it was clear who the them was.” [Laughter] “Today, we’re not so sure who the ‘they’ are”—[laughter]—“but we know they’re there.”

John Ashcroft, by the way, attributes the way I talk to my religious fervor. In fact, the first time we met, he thought I was talking in tongues. [Laughter] Then there is my famous statement: “Rarely is the question asked, is our children learning?” [Laughter] Let’s analyze that sentence for a moment. [Laughter] If you’re a stickler, you probably think the singular verb “is” should have been the plural “are.” But if you read it closely, you’ll see that I’m using the intransitive plural subjective tense. [Laughter] And so the word “is” are correct. [Laughter]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have to admit, in my sentences, I go where no man has gone before. [Laughter] But the way I see it is, I am a boon to the English language. I’ve coined new words, like “misunderestimate”—[laughter]—and “Hispanically.” [Laughter] I’ve expanded the definition of words, themselves, using “vulcanize” when I meant “polarize”—[laughter]—“Grecians” when I meant “Greeks,” “inebriating” when I meant “exhilarating.” [Laughter] And instead of “barriers and tariffs,” I said, “terriers and bariffs.” [Laughter]

We all make our contributions in the world, and I suppose mine will not be to the literary treasures of the Western Civilization. [Laughter] But I do hope to contribute in my own way. And one of those ways is to bring closer the day when every child and every American learns to read. And that is why the budget I submitted to the United States Congress triples the amount of money available for reading programs all across America.

I'm proud of mother. She took up the cause more than a decade ago. And she didn't leave it behind in the White House. Through her efforts and the efforts of all who have helped the Barbara Bush Foundation, so many lives have been enriched with new opportunities.

We heard Norma Vargas beautifully describe the good that has come into her life since she has found the courage to walk into that San Jose classroom to begin her first lesson. Tens of thousands more have their own stories. Stories of people finding new and better jobs, and gaining a new sense of dignity, because now they can read.

And I'm proud that Laura has her own commitment to education. She was a teacher when I met her. In her own way, she will always be a teacher. She's the best kind of teacher, too, the kind who leaves no one out and believes in the possibilities of every person.

That's the spirit of your cause and ours. I thank each of you for all you have contributed. It will be repaid many times over in lives of new achievement and lives of new hope.

Thank you, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:04 p.m. at the Wortham Theater Center. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former President George Bush, former First Lady Barbara Bush, First Lady Laura Bush, and former Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 22

In the evening, the President returned from Quebec, Canada, to Washington, DC.

April 23

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald J. McConnell to be Ambassador to Eritrea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen A. Cambone to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald Cameron Findlay to be Deputy Secretary of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lori A. Forman to be Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development for Asia and the Near East.

The White House announced that the President invited President Jorge Batlle of Uruguay to the White House on April 24.

April 24

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard Henry Jones to be Ambassador to Kuwait.

The President announced his intention to nominate James G. Roche to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas E. White to be Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gordon England to be Secretary of the Navy.

April 25

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, and later, he traveled to Little Rock, AR.

In the evening, the President traveled to Crawford, TX.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bonnie McElveen-Hunter to be Ambassador to Finland.